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# Congress of the United States
## House of Representatives
### Washington, D.C. 20515

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February 25, 1981

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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Hon. Alexander Haig, Jr.
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to you as Members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee to express our serious concerns about the possible sale to Saudi Arabia of sophisticated offensive equipment for its F-15 jet fighters.

You will recall that, at the time of the original purchase of the planes in 1978, the Congress was given explicit and unequivocal assurances that offensive equipment, including fuel tanks and bomb racks which increase the range and firepower of the aircraft, would not be transferred to Saudi Arabia.

We recognize that the United States has a very real and legitimate interest in the security and stability of Saudi Arabia, and especially in the potential role of the Saudis as a moderating influence on other nations of the region with which our relations are less friendly. The Saudis have called the sale yet another "test" of our friendship for them. Friendship is reciprocal. While they are not reluctant to make demands upon us, the Saudis nonetheless continue to attack President Sadat and the Egypt-Israel peace treaty as well as making repeated calls for a holy war (jihad) against Israel. We should, in this regard, like to know what assurances Saudi Arabia has given the United States of any significant changes in its attitude and position towards Egypt and Israel.

The sale of this equipment would not significantly enhance the security of other nations with which we have close and enduring ties. There simply is no external threat to Saudi security that requires the acquisition of an offensive capability for the F-15s. To the contrary, developments since 1978 have actually diminished any potential threats to Saudi security. Whereas, in 1978,

Benjamin S. Rosenthal + others

it may have been plausible to argue that Saudi Arabia needed the F-15s to defend itself against a possible Iraqi attack, in the wake of the ongoing Iran-Iraq war and the rapproachment between Saudi Arabia and Iraq, it is less likely that Iraq will be either willing or capable of undertaking such an attack. There is no other country in the region which might be deterred from launching an attack against Saudi Arabia because of this equipment.

The sale of this offensive equipment, despite the absence of a compelling Saudi need for it, will have severe adverse implications for Israel's security. The maintenance of air superiority is essential to the survival of Israel. Today Saudi aircraft largely lack the range and capability to attack Israel and thus would not be a major factor in a war. The potential use of the Saudi F-15s in another Arab-Israeli war will immeasurably complicate Israel's defensive problems. Israel will have to further stretch its already outnumbered air force and divert some of its aircraft from other essential missions in order to defend against the possibility of Saudi air attacks.

It should also be recognized that the provision of the new equipment may very well diminish, rather than enhance, Saudi security. Once the F-15s become an offensive threat against Israel, they could very weli become the target of a preemptive attack at the outbreak of any regional hostilities. This will make it more likely that Saudi Arabia will be drawn into any conflict.

In view of the grave reservations expressed above, we urge you to seek the broadest possible consultation with the appropriate committees in both houses of the Congress before a final determination is made about Saudi Arabia's request. With the information we have now, we do not believe that this sale should be allowed.

Sincerely,

BENJAMIN S. ROSENTHAL
Member of Congress

STEPHEN J. SOLARZ
Member of Congress

JONATHAN B. BINGHAM
Member of Congress

BENJAMIN A. GILMAN
Member of Congress

DANTE B. FASCELL
Member of Congress

TOM LANTOS
Member of Congress

DON BONKER
Member of Congress

HOWARD WOLPE
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BOB SHAMANSKY
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Member of Congress